

## THE ROSEATE HAZE.

By Katherine Lynch.

Kalulani sat on the bank under the algarobas and dug her brown toes into the sand as she concentrated her mind in the unusual effort of thought. Her thought was of the haele, John Whitton. He had come less frequently of late; and it required more than usual effort and extraordinary libations of o-kuli-hau to put him into the old-time good humor when he found everything about Kalulani charming from the crown of her black, curly head to the toe of her shapely foot. Kalulani knew these signs in men and she knew that the time for decisive action had come.

There was only one thing that permanently held a haele. A foolish thing in the eyes of Kalulani. Merely a matter of a few mumbled words and a plain little golden circlet. Kalulani twisted one on her finger. She had brought it only that morning, by way of providing against emergency, and she would greatly have preferred one of the pretty, glittering ones that the clerk had been anxious to show her. However, that was haele fashion. And it was fitting that one who had royal blood in her veins—it was commemorated in her name and traceable through a remote and extremely wavy line—should marry with a white man.

So Kalulani knitted her smooth brow and traced with her toes in the brown sand the screed of a man's destiny. After a time she rose, stretched herself easily, divested herself of the red and white holoku trailing about her feet; and so, clad only in a neat available mou-mou, slipped into the green water and spent a luxurious morning hunting for sea-weed to eke out the evening meal.

When John Whitton arrived, irritable and exhausted from a hot, trying day in the office, the little bungalow bore a festive air of welcome. The savory odor of broiling squid was in the air. The table under the hantree was spread with immaculate linen and set out with a succulent dish of larded pig and mullet baked in ti leaves. On the center was a high-shouldered, squarefaced bottle, flanked by smaller vessels of o-kuli-hau; and Kalulani, smiling a greeting, looked very pretty in her white holoku with the scarlet hibiscus in her dusky hair.

It was a pleasant sight for a tired man; and the ugly creases in John Whitton's forehead smoothed out as he sank into a chair and returned Kalulani's clinging kiss.

Some hours later a holy father, who did not ask too many questions, pronounced the words that made the somewhat irregular descendant of kings the wife of a rather stupid haele, who seemed not to understand how, when the time came for the ring, one could be so readily produced from his waistcoat pocket; where undoubtedly he had put it against this very occasion.

Many days later John Whitton opened on a bare and ugly world a pair of eyes that for a fortnight had seen only through a dim and roseate haze; a haze in which a red-lipped, bronze daughter of the gods and a certain high-shouldered, square-faced bottle had been the only essential and perceptible factors in a gloriously easeful existence. The square-faced bottle—several of them, in fact—lay against the wall of the bungalow, hopelessly empty. Kalulani, in an untidy holoku, her tangled hair about her shoulders, sat on the lanai hard by smoking a comfortable Havana, which, from the fragrance, John Whitton recognized as one of his own particular stock.

He unsteadily raised himself to a sitting position, carefully planted his feet on the floor, rested his head on his hands, and conscientiously tried to piece together an intelligible connection with his former life. The effort was quite unavailing and he soon surrendered it. Then his gaze

fell on a low table drawn close to the couch. There were letters on it—two letters and a folded slip of paper. These John Whitton eyed distastefully. Habit, grown instinctive, urged his reluctant brain to give them its consideration. The result was physically nauseating and he gave it over and staggered to his feet.

Kalulani indolently stirred and threw him a glance over her shoulder. Then she rose and came to him. "Sick?" she interrogated. "Better you lie down."

"No," he roughly answered. "I've had enough. I must get out of this."

"All right," she acquiesced. "More better read letter first." She slipped her hand along his bare arm and rested it ostentatiously on his wrist.

Something cool and hard touched John's pulse. He looked down. On the slim brown finger was a plain circlet of gold. The world went red before the man's eyes. He pushed the woman from him.

"Where did you get that?" he hoarsely asked. But a cold fear clutched at his heartstrings and a tiny burning thread of memory ran through the fragments of the roseate haze and linked the present with a misty, far-off past.

The woman spoke indulgently. "More better you read."

She thrust the folded paper toward him and sauntered out on the lanai. For a moment she watched his face. Then she passed under the algarobas and disappeared from view.

Whitton unfolded the paper and read the few crisp lines. "God," he whispered, dry-lipped, "God."

The paper was in duplicate. The terminology was official. It set forth very simply the salient fact of that even of a fortnight ago which had been lost in the beginning of the roseate haze.

The two letters had been thoughtfully opened. The first contained a succinct statement from Whitton's chief that his services would no longer be needed at the office, and that he was at liberty to call for the balance due him on account. The date was many days old; but this the man was not in a position to know.

The second letter was longer. The man's face grew gray as he read it and his eyes hollowed like the eyes of an old man. The girl back home wrote a tender, joyous letter, in which she set forth the fact that the troublesome mortgage was finally lifted and that she now was free to leave the dear old mother and the little sister—Betty was grown such a woman John would never know her—and that she would come to her darling John whenever he should be ready for her. Then at the last her loving heart overcame her sweet timidity, and she ended with frightened daring: "Oh, boy, dearest boy, let it be soon."

When John Whitton rose and walked across the room his staggering gait bore no relation to the empty square-faced bottles lying against the wall. The effect of those days of roseate haze had passed from him quite. He was deadly sober and his mind worked with an awful clearness. His step was merely the feeble tottering of one who has grown very old.

From the case hanging against the wall the man took out a loaded pistol. It was an excellent bit of mechanism, clean and well primed. But it did not seem to please him. He frowned darkly as he fingered it and then laid it back in the case. Still with the same uncertain step he walked to the open window and looked out over the sea.

The cool white breakers tumbling over the reef were a refreshing sight for his burning eyes. The man watched them for a time. Then he moved to the table and drew to him pen, ink and paper.

The obituary which John Whitton penned was direct and convincing. It touched briefly on the honorable career of one John Whitton, deceased; and in a few manly words recorded his most regrettable taking off; he having essayed a swim beyond even his skilled strength, and so perished in

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